

Software Engine for Enabling Proxy Chat-Room Interaction

by inventor(s)

Suman Kumar Inala and Srihari Kumar

5

Field of the Invention

The present invention is in the field of Internet navigation including various communication and connection technologies and pertains more particularly to methods and apparatus, including software, for enabling proxy chat-interaction services for scheduled chat events.

10

Cross-Reference to Related Documents

15

20

25

The present invention is a continuation in part (CIP) to a patent application S/N 09/550,348 entitled "*Method and Apparatus for Providing Auto-Registration and Service Access to Internet Sites for Internet Portal Subscribers*" filed on 04/14/00, which is a (CIP) to a patent application 09/532,647 entitled "*Method and Apparatus for Retrieving Information From Semi-Structured, WEB-Based Data Sources*" filed on 03/22/00, which is a continuation in part (CIP) of a patent application S/N 09/323,598 entitled "*Method and Apparatus for Obtaining and Presenting WEB Summaries to Users*" filed on 06/01/99, which is a continuation in part (CIP) to a patent application S/N 09/208,740 entitled "*Method and Apparatus for Providing and Maintaining a User-Interactive Portal System Accessible via Internet or other Switched-Packet-Network*" filed on 12/08/98, disclosures of which are incorporated herein in their entirety herein by reference.

30

Background of the Invention

The information network known as the World Wide Web (WWW), which is a subset of the well-known Internet, is arguably the most complete source of publicly accessible information available. Anyone with a suitable Internet appliance such as a personal computer with a standard Internet connection may access (go on-line) and navigate to information pages (termed web pages) stored on Internet-connected servers for the purpose of garnering information and initiating transactions with hosts of such servers and pages.

Many companies offer various subscription services accessible via the Internet. For example, many people now do their banking, stock trading, shopping, and so forth from the comfort of their own homes via Internet access. Typically, a user, through subscription, has access to personalized and secure WEB pages for such functions. By typing in a user name and a password or other personal identification code, a user may obtain information, initiate transactions, buy stock, and accomplish a myriad of other tasks.

One problem that is encountered by an individual who has several or many such subscriptions to Internet-brokered services is that there are invariably many passwords and/or log-in codes to be used. Often a same password or code cannot be used for every service, as the password or code may already be taken by another user. A user may not wish to supply a code unique to the user such as perhaps a social security number because of security issues, including quality of security, that may vary from service to service. Additionally, many users at their own volition may choose different passwords for different sites so as to have increased security, which in fact also increases the number of passwords a user may have.

Another issue that can plague a user who has many passworded subscriptions is the fact that they must bookmark many WEB pages in a computer cache so that they may quickly find and access the various services. For example, in order to reserve and pay for airline travel, a user must connect to the Internet, go to his/her bookmarks file and select an airline page. The user then has to enter a user name and password, and follow on-screen instructions once the page is delivered. If the user wishes to purchase tickets from the WEB site, and wishes to transfer funds from an on-line banking service, the user must also look for and select the personal bank or account page to initiate a funds transfer for the tickets. Different user names and passwords may be required to access these other pages, and things get quite complicated.

Although this preceding example is merely exemplary, it is generally known that much work related to finding WEB pages, logging in with passwords, and the like is required to successfully do business on the WEB.

A service known to the inventor and described in disclosure referenced by S/N 09/208,740 listed under the cross-reference to related documents section provides a WEB service that allows a user to store all of his password protected pages in one location such that browsing and garnering information from them is much simplified. A feature of the above service allows a user to program certain tasks into the system such that requested tasks are executed by an agent (software) based on user instruction. The service stores user password and log-in information and uses the information to log-in to the user's sites, thus enabling the user to navigate without having to manually input log-in or password codes to gain access to the links.

The above-described service uses a server to present a user-personalized application that may be displayed as an interactive home page